discussed in the Conference of Chief Ministers held on 21.5.2001 under the chairmanship of the Hon'ble Prime Minister and thereafter in the Standing Committee of some Union Ministers and Chief Ministers which was set up pursuant to the recommendations made in the Conference. The Standing Committee suggested that the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 may continue as an umbrella legislation for the Centre and the States, to be used when needed, but a progressive dismantling of controls and restrictions was also required. Accordingly various controls *viz.* licensing requirement, stock limits and movement restrictions etc. have been removed in respect of the specified foodstuffs in the context of liberalization of Indian economy and comfortable food situation in the country.

Subsequently, the Standing Committee of Secretaries constituted under the chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary to assist the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) and Cabinet Committee on Economic Reforms (CCER) considered a proposal to "Putting Essential Committee Act, 1955 into suspended animation to be revived by GoI notification only when and for the purposes and duration for which it is necessary" and "Remove all restrictions on inter-State movements of produce; emergency power may be retained for drought/natural calamities". In accordance with the advice tendered by Ministry of Law the Committee observed that the Act can not be put into suspended animation, but decided in its meeting held on 29th August, 2002 that regular reviews may be made to identify more commodities to be deleted from the list of essential commodities under the Act alongwith need to continue with the remaining controls and restrictions on their movement, stocking etc. As a result, three more commodities *viz.* (a) "Exercise Books", (b) "Insecticides, fungicides, weedicides and the like" and (c) "Onion", have been deleted from the list of essential commodities.

Infrastructure for FCI in W.B.

212. SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Chief Minister of West Bengal has requested Government to create necessary infrastructure, including storing place for F.C.I.; and

(b) if so, the action taken, so far, thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Food Corporation of India has taken action to make necessary storage space available for receiving the procured rice and will provde all possible assistance to the State Agencies in the procurement operations during Kharif Marketing Season 2004-05.

Sugar factories in Karnataka

213. DR. VIJAY MALLYA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) how many sugar factories are there in Karnataka under various sectors/category, namely Government, private and co-operative sector;

(b) how many factories are sick or profit making;

(c) whether it is a fact that sugarcane growers of Karnataka are selling their sugarcane in the neighbouring States, like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra etc. where selling prices of sugarcane is high; and

(d) whether Government are planning to have a uniform price for sugarcane under the new Sugar/Agriculture policy all over the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) As on 15.11.2004, there are 47 installed sugar factories in the State of Karnataka comprising 3 in public sector, 22 each in cooperative and private sector respectively.

(b) 12 factories in the State of Karnataka are sick which includes 6 in cooperative sector I, in public sector and 5 in private sector.

(c) Since five sugar factories in Maharashtra and one in Karnataka are covered under the Multi State Cooperative Act, a small portion of sugarcane might be procured from Maharashtra and *vice versa*.

(d) Central Government fixes the Statutory Minimum Price(SMP) of sugarcane, linked to a basic recovery level of 8.5 per cent which is uniform for the country as a whole.